



NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release:

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September 10 is Suicide Prevention Day

BISMARCK, N.D. – Suicide Awareness Day is Wednesday, Sept. 10, 2014, and the North Dakota Department of Health (NDDoH) reminds residents that suicide affects everyone of all ages and races in North Dakota. North Dakota ranks 16th in the nation for its rate of suicide deaths based on most recent national statistics. Suicide was the 9th leading cause of death in 2013 among North Dakotans with 138 residents dying as the result of suicide in 2013. An additional 18 people who were not residents died due to suicide in North Dakota in 2013, bringing total to 156 suicides that occurred in North Dakota in 2013. Suicide was the leading cause of North Dakota residents aged 10-24 in 2013.

Statistically, suicide rates have typically been higher in the Native American population and for men. Men are four times more likely than women to die from suicide, but women are three times more likely to attempt suicide. “Being aware of the warning signs of suicide and being willing to talk about suicide is so important,” said Savelkoul. “Suicide is a very complex and multi-faceted condition. There is rarely one cause for suicide.”

Savelkoul says that when you see behavioral changes in people, don’t be afraid to ask them if they are suicidal. People are much more likely to talk to those they trust when first disclosing suicidal thoughts, and you will not create suicidal thoughts for someone who was not previously thinking about suicide. There are many evidence based or best practice community trainings, such as Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST), Question, Persuade, Refer (QPR) or Sources of Strength, that provide community members with education on what warning signs to watch for, how to talk about suicide and how to get someone help.

Risk factors for suicide include, but are not limited to:

- Previous suicide attempt(s)
- History of depression or other mental illness
- Alcohol or drug abuse
- Family history of suicide or violence
- Physical illness
- Feeling alone

-more-

The warning signs of suicide can include changes in a person's mood, diet or sleeping pattern; increased alcohol or drug use; withdrawal from friends, family and society; rage or uncontrolled anger; and reckless behavior.

Some of the ways to be helpful to someone who is threatening suicide include:

- Be direct. Talk openly and matter-of-factly about suicide.
- Be willing to listen. Allow expressions of feelings. Accept the feelings.
- Be nonjudgmental. Don't debate whether suicide is right or wrong, or whether feelings are good or bad. Don't lecture on the value of life.
- Get involved. Become available. Show interest and support.
- Don't dare him or her to do it.
- Don't act shocked. This will put distance between you.
- Don't be sworn to secrecy. Seek support.
- Offer hope that alternatives are available but do not offer glib reassurance.
- Take action. Remove lethal means, such as guns or stockpiled pills.
- Get help from someone specializing in crisis intervention and suicide prevention. Help is available by calling **1.800.273.TALK (8255)** a free and confidential 24/7 suicide prevention lifeline.

For information about developing local prevention programs or for more information about suicide prevention or information about the Suicide Prevention Coalition, contact Micki Savelkoul, North Dakota Department of Health, at 701.328.4580.

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